

RCAC Annual Report: January 1st – December 31st 2014

Spring and Summer 2014

During the year 2014 the Metropolitan Education Commission's Regional College Access Center (RCAC) continued working at four area high schools, Sunnyside, Flowing Wells, Pueblo, and Desert View to develop outreach and services. All of these schools have fragile populations that fit criteria of having a large population of underrepresented, first generation, minority students. Each high school has a designated school counselor to lead advising on college access. ***The RCAC Youth Ambassadors conducted sixty-seven (67) outreach presentations for three thousand one hundred and forty-four (3,144) students. They also conducted two hundred and seventy (270) one on one advising sessions.*** In September of 2014 the program was expanded to include Ajo High School, Andrada Polytechnic High School (Vail), Catalina Magnet High School, Palo Verde High School, and Sahuarita High School.

Each of the high schools has a designated Youth Ambassador that reports to a high school counselor who acts as their site coordinator. ***There are now a total of eleven (11) Youth Ambassadors that represent the RCAC within their school communities.*** The Youth Ambassador generally comes from a low-income, and/or first generation home and is selected by exhibiting exceptional leadership qualities, and high academic achievement. All of this year's High School Youth Ambassadors are honors students at their respective schools. The Ambassadors complete an intensive training with the RCAC Coordinator on the RCAC website, and college access topics. They then conduct classroom presentations, one-on-one advising sessions, set up browsing exhibits for on-campus college fairs, and answer questions about college access for their peers. Fall 2014 participation data will be available for all the current RCAC Youth Ambassador Programs after January 1st, 2015.

The MEC has also continued partnerships and collaborations with College Greenlight, the University of Arizona College of Medicine, University of Arizona College of Nursing, University of Arizona Health Professions Advising Club, the Pima Community College West Campus Office of Student Life, TUSD Alternative Education Programs, Pima County Alternative Education Programs, Flowing Wells Alternative Education Programs, La Paloma Family Services, Tucson Indian Center (TIC), Tucson Urban League (TUL), Tucson United Way, the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), and the TUSD Asian Pacific American Student Services Department on higher education access. RCAC programming has included participation in TUSD's Alternative Education Programs, TUSD's Tucson College Night, TUSD's Parent University, TUSD Ethnic Studies Department FAFSA/Scholarship Training, Pima Vocational High School College Going Culture Program, Tucson Indian Center's New Enrollee Orientation, Tucson High School College Culture Student/Parent Activities, the TeenAge Parent Program Fall College Festival, and the GradNation Summit. Additionally, the RCAC has been hard at work presenting the RCAC Youth Ambassador Program to the counseling departments of eight (8) Pima County school districts which include; Tucson Unified School District, Sunnyside Unified School District, Sahuarita Unified School District, Flowing Wells Unified School District, Amphitheater Unified School District, Marana Unified School District, JTED Unified School District, and Vail Unified School District.

The Pima County Library/RCAC Youth Ambassador Program continues to develop in a positive manner. Youth Ambassadors are now located at Valencia Library, Mission Library, Woods Library, Santa Rosa

Library and Flowing Wells Library. A new version of the program will be introduced as part of a college and career initiative presented by library officials. The model will include Pima County workforce development activities and the RCAC College Access Model.

The RCAC also partnered with the University of Arizona, the Tucson Indian Center and the Pascua Yaqui Education Department to reintroduce the “First Generation” documentary to two (2) Native American learning communities. Screenings were held at Baboquivari High School and also at the Yaqui Educational Services “Education Extravaganza Fair” which was held at the Itom Mahtawa’apo Community Education and Cultural Center. The RCAC also worked with the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) to present a screening and “Meet the Cast” event at their annual Youth Leadership Conference which was held on Friday, March 13th, 2014.

The RCAC has also partnered with the UA College of Family Studies and Human Development to create “pipeline” College Intern Program. This year five (5) students, four (4) from the University of Arizona and one (1) from Brown University, were selected to provide college access planning, workshops and mentoring throughout the summer and fall of 2014. Their first activity was working with seventy-five (75) students from Desert View High School Incoming Freshman Boost Program. The students in the DVHS Boost Program were selected to participate because of their borderline “At-Risk” status. The Interns provided a full week of in-depth information on high school planning for college access, and they also worked individually with students to help them understand how important their freshman year with regard to their college aspirations. The RCAC Intern Program is currently working with Pueblo Magnet High School’s 9th and 10th grade AVID Program. The Interns assist with lesson plans and mentoring activities.

The Executive Director and Program Coordinator attended the 2014 NCAN conference in Phoenix, Arizona. Participating in these events keeps the Director and Program Coordinator informed on important and current issues in college access.

RCAC Ambassadors and their Counselors/RCAC Site Coordinators:

The RCAC Student Ambassador Program has resumed groundwork within its seven (7) current target high schools (Ajo High School, Andrada Polytechnic High School, Catalina Magnet High School, Desert View High School, Flowing Wells High School, Palo Verde High School, Pueblo Magnet High School and Sunnyside High School) and has continued its partnership with the Pima County Library. New RCAC Student Ambassadors were selected for Pueblo Magnet High School, Desert View High School and Sunnyside High School, while new Ambassador programs were started at Ajo High School, Andrada Polytechnic High School, Catalina Magnet High School, and Palo Verde High School. Training for the ambassadors and library site supervisors was conducted on Saturday, September 13th at the Joel D. Valdez Main Library. At present there are twelve (14) student ambassadors working to bring college access awareness within Pima County and the City of Tucson.

RCAC Outreach and Collaboration: Fall 2014

The RCAC has become a “go to” college access resource for the City of Tucson and Pima County. This year the RCAC will be providing services for the following twenty-nine (29) high schools: Andrada Polytechnic High School, Empire High School, Cienega High School, Desert View High School, Sunnyside High School, Walden Grove High School, Sahuarita High School, Pueblo High School, Cholla High School, Tucson High School, Catalina High School, Palo Verde High School, Rincon High School, Sahuaro High School, Sabino High School, Project MORE High School, Teenage Parent High School, Pima Vocational High School, Flowing Wells High School, Sentinel High School, Amphitheater High School, Canyon Del Oro High School, Ironwood Ridge High School, Marana High School, Mountain View High School, Hiaki High School, Salpointe High School, San Miguel High School, and Ajo High School. The RCAC, along with the newly developed UA Interns Program, is collaborating with seven (7) City and Pima County School Districts to provide ongoing college skills workshops and college access mentoring. The workshops include the following categories; “Personal Statements and Essay Writing”, “Understanding The Common Application”, “The College Admissions Process/One on One Help with College Applications”, “How to Find Scholarships”, “One on One FAFSA Help”, and “Cracking the College Code: Deciphering Your “Next Steps” and Financial Aid Details”. The RCAC and UA Interns are also working closely with the Pueblo Magnet High School Freshman/Sophomore Advancement Via Individual Determination Program (AVID) to provide workshops and mentoring throughout the school year.

The RCAC Program participated in the Arizona Post Secondary Commissions’ “AZ College Application Drive” at three (2) TUSD High Schools (Pueblo HS and Tucson HS) and two (2) Sunnyside High Schools (Desert View HS and Sunnyside HS). The goal was for every senior to complete at least one college application. Three (3) of the four (4) participating high schools had a near 100% completion rate. Students that completed the AZ Post Secondary Commission Survey also received a green “I’m Going to College” rubber bracelet and a chance to win \$300. The RCAC has also been heavily involved in parent information events at Desert View High School, Pueblo High School, Cholla High School and TUSD’s Parent University. The Pueblo and Cholla events were organized by TUSD’s Mexican American Student Services Program (MASS); the RCAC has been asked to participate in all of their 2014-2015 parent information events. The RCAC also co-presented along with, Phoenix’s College Depot and the Northern Arizona College Access Resource Center (NACARC), at this year’s University of Arizona, Early Academic Outreach “College Knowledge for Counselors” event which took place at the University of Arizona’s College of Medicine campus in Phoenix, AZ. More than one hundred counselors from across the state had the opportunity to learn about the services that each center provides through their websites and one on one services. The RCAC College Intern’s Program continues to participate in the mentoring program in place at Pueblo High School’s Freshman/Sophomore AVID Program. The Interns have assisted with college access lessons and personal growth activities. The RCAC Student Ambassador Program is now in place at nine (9) Pima County high schools (Ajo High School, Andrada Polytechnic High School, Palo Verde High School, Catalina Magnet High School, Pueblo Magnet High School, Flowing Wells High School, Sunnyside High School, Desert View High School and Sahuarita High School). This year we have instituted a new reporting structure, as a result, no data will be available for their work until the end of the month of December, 2014. There are now eleven (11) RCAC Student Ambassadors working within these schools; Ajo and Sahuarita are operating with two (2) ambassadors each respectively. The RCAC has also expanded into the Tucson Urban Leagues’ Pima County Youth Employment One-Stop

Center. The RCAC will have a Student Ambassador on site to work with youth and families on all matters related to college access. Finally, the Pima County Library and the RCAC are currently working on a plan that will introduce college access services as a feature of their own College and Career Centers. The RCAC Student Ambassador Program is currently in place at the Woods, Flowing Wells, Santa Rosa, Valencia and Mission Libraries.

Demographic Characteristics and Number of Direct and Indirect Program Participants:

The total number of **indirect and direct participants** measured is **twenty two thousand four hundred and eighty-three (22,483)**. The number of **direct service participants** to date is **five thousand nine hundred and twenty-one (5,921)**. The **RCAC Website** received **sixteen thousand seven hundred and thirty-five (16,735) unique website hits** during the year 2014. This represents a significant increase from previous years. **Four hundred and sixty-three (463)** Pima County residents received assistance with the completion of their **FAFSA applications**, and **nine hundred and four (904)** community members where assisted with the **intent to enroll** at both instate and out of state post secondary institutions.

Contact with direct participants occurs through one on one advising sessions, classroom presentations, presentations by Youth Ambassadors, and coordinator/ambassador workshops. The sessions and workshops typically last one hour in length covering college access topics such as the RCAC website, financial aid and the FAFSA, scholarship and essay writing, the admissions process, organizational and study skills, and more. One hundred and eighty-nine (189) of these direct events have taken place. Additionally, the RCAC has had contact with indirect participants through a total of seventy-three (73) tabling events, college fairs, classroom workshops and parent workshops.

National Honors

David Rodriguez, RCAC Coordinator, was the 2014 National College Access Network (NCAN) recipient of the David Swedlow Memorial College Access Staff Award of Excellence which recognizes dedication, hard work, and innovation of a college access program employee.

Dr. June Webb-Vignery, MEC Executive Director, is part of the Rapid Response Policy Team on national issues for the National College Access Network (NCAN).

State Honors

The MEC Executive Director serves on the Advisory Committee for the Arizona College Access Network (AzCAN). The RCAC is the College Access/Success anchor for Southern Arizona. College Depot (Phoenix) and Gear Up (Northern Arizona University – Flagstaff) serve as the anchors for the middle and northern parts of the state.